

Religious Coexistence in the Thought and Practice of Emir 'Abd al-Qādir
— A Historical Study of Managing Difference in Times of Crisis —

التعايش الديني في فكر وممارسة الأمير عبد القادر
— دراسة تاريخية لإدارة الاختلاف في أوقات الأزمات —

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Abstract:

This article examines the experience of Emir Abdelkader as a historical model of religious coexistence in contexts of conflict and crisis. It aims to analyze the religious and intellectual foundations that shaped his approach to managing religious difference, and to trace its practical manifestations in Algeria during the period of French colonial expansion and in Greater Syria during the sectarian violence of 1860. The article adopts a historical-analytical approach to examine Emir Abdelkader's attitudes and practices toward Christian communities, including his treatment of prisoners, his diplomatic relations with European actors, and his role in protecting Christians during periods of sectarian violence.

Key words : Religious Coexistence; Tolerance; Emir 'Abd al-Qādir; Christianity.

ملخص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في التعايش الديني في فكر وممارسة الأمير عبد القادر الجزائري، من خلال تحليل مواقفه العملية في سياقات اتسمت بالصراع والاحتقان الديني خلال القرن التاسع عشر. وتعتمد الدراسة على المنهج التاريخي التحليلي لفهم كيفية توظيف المرجعية الإسلامية في تنظيم العلاقة مع الآخر الديني، ولا سيما المسيحيين، في كلٍّ من الجزائر وبلاد الشام. وتُظهر النتائج أن ممارسات الأمير عبد القادر في إدارة الاختلاف الديني اتسمت بالالتزام بالمبادئ الإسلامية لحماية النفس الإنسانية، وأسهمت في الحدّ من العنف الطائفي في ظروف استثنائية. كما تبرز الدراسة القيمة التحليلية لهذه التجربة في فهم آليات إدارة التعدّد الديني زمن الأزمات ضمن إطار تاريخي واقعي.

كلمات مفتاحية: التعايش الديني؛ التسامح؛ الأمير عبد القادر؛ المسيحية.

Introduction

Religious coexistence is among the central issues that have accompanied human societies throughout history, as it constitutes a fundamental pillar for achieving social peace and maintaining stability within religiously and culturally plural environments. The importance of this concept becomes particularly evident during periods of crisis and conflict, when religious differences often turn into sources of tension, exclusion, and violence if they are not managed within clear ethical and legal frameworks.

Within this context, Islamic history offers prominent models that embodied the values of tolerance and respect for the religious Other, foremost among them the experience of Emir 'Abd al-Qādir (1807–1883). This experience is distinguished by its synthesis of deep commitment to Islamic law and practical openness toward followers of other religions, under exceptional circumstances marked by colonial occupation, prolonged warfare, and sectarian strife. Raised in a deeply rooted Islamic Sufi environment, Emir 'Abd al-Qādir's intellectual and spiritual formation was shaped by the principles of justice, mercy, and the preservation of human dignity. Yet this strong religious grounding did not lead him toward isolation or fanaticism; rather, it fostered a balanced vision that enabled him to establish humane and respectful relations with the religious Other, particularly Christians.

This vision was translated into concrete practices, whether during his resistance to French colonial rule in Algeria—through his humane treatment of Christian prisoners and his diplomatic relations with European envoys—or later in Greater Syria, where he played a decisive role in protecting Christian communities during the sectarian violence of 1860, drawing upon firm religious and ethical foundations as well as a profound political awareness of the dangers of sectarian fragmentation.

Despite the abundance of studies that have examined the figure of Emir 'Abd al-Qādir from the perspectives of jihad, resistance, and state-building, the dimension of religious coexistence in his experience has often been treated as a general moral value, without sufficient analytical attention to how it functioned as a practical historical mechanism for managing religious difference in times of crisis. From this perspective, the present study is structured around the following central question: *How did Emir 'Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā'irī embody the principle of religious coexistence in his thought and practical conduct, and to what extent was this principle effective in managing religious difference within contexts of conflict and crisis?*

Building on this problematique, the study seeks to analyze the religious and intellectual foundations that shaped Emir 'Abd al-Qādir's vision of religious coexistence and to trace its practical manifestations in both Algeria and Greater Syria. To this end, the study adopts a historical-analytical approach, based on examining key events and positions and analyzing discourse and practice within their religious, political, and historical contexts, drawing on a range of Arabic and European historical sources. Through this approach, the study aims to highlight the humanistic and civilizational dimensions of Emir 'Abd al-Qādir's experience and to present it as a practical historical model for managing religious difference during times of crisis.

1. An Introduction to Emir Abdelkader

Lineage:

Emir 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn ibn Muṣṭafā ibn Muḥammad traces his lineage back to al-Ḥasan al-Sibtī, son of 'Alī ibn Abī Tālib (may God be pleased with them both). The origins of his family go back to their ancestor Idrīs ibn 'Abd Allāh, the founder of the Idrisid state, who settled in the Islamic Maghreb. Several historians point to the family's descent from the Prophet's household (*Ahl al-Bayt*), a lineage that conferred upon it considerable religious and social prestige within its environment (al-Ṣallābī, 2015, p. 351).

1.1. His Upbringing

Emir 'Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn was born in May 1807 CE, corresponding to Rabī' al-Awwal 1222 AH. Another account holds that he was born on 23 Rajab 1222 AH, corresponding to 26 September

1807 CE, in the town of al-Qayṭana, located in Wādī al-Ḥammām west of the city of Mascara, within the Province of the West (*Īyālat al-Gharb*), whose capital was Oran. He was raised in a deeply religious environment, receiving an Islamic education under the supervision of his father, Muḥyī al-Dīn, one of the most prominent shaykhs of the Qādiriyya order. This upbringing played a decisive role in shaping his scholarly and spiritual personality, as he distinguished himself as a learned man, a jurist, and a sage, adorned with Islamic virtues and noble moral qualities (al-Jazzār, 1997, p. 19; Ballāḥ, 2006, vol. 1, p. 168; al-Ṣallābī, 2015, p. 354).

Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir memorized the Qur’ān and learned writing before the age of five. By the age of twelve, he had completed memorization of the Qur’ān and acquired a solid grounding in several foundational Islamic sciences. In 1236 AH, his father sent him—according to another account, accompanied him—to Oran, where he continued his studies at the school of Sīdī Aḥmad Khūja. There he studied Arabic literature, jurisprudence, Qur’ānic exegesis, Prophetic traditions, and grammar. He did not remain there long, however, returning to his birthplace, al-Qayṭana, to complete his education. He studied under Sīdī Aḥmad ibn Ṭāhir, the judge of Arzew, and in addition to the religious sciences, he acquired knowledge in arithmetic, astronomy, and geography. He also displayed a marked interest in the transformations taking place in Europe at the time, while continuing to receive Sufi instruction under his father. He later married Lālā Khayra, the daughter of his cousin Sīdī ‘Alī Abū Ṭālib (Ballāḥ, 2006, pp. 168–169; al-Jazzār, 1997, p. 19; Bū‘azīz, 1983, p. 42).

Despite his noble lineage, Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir did not exploit it to win over his people or to secure social standing based on genealogical privilege, nor did he boast of it. Rather, he was known for his humility and closeness to the people. He expressed this clearly when he stated: “Never ask about a person’s origin or ancestry; ask instead about his life, his deeds, his courage, and his virtues—then you will know who he truly is” (Ballāḥ, 2006, p. 168). He embodied this principle in his conduct, believing that distinction among people lies only in morality and action, in accordance with the Prophetic tradition: “All of you are from Adam, and Adam is from dust; there is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab except through piety” (Ballāḥ, 2006, p. 168).

In 1241 AH / 1825 CE, Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir set out with his father to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca. Muḥyī al-Dīn chose to take ‘Abd al-Qādir rather than his four other sons, recognizing in him exceptional intellectual and moral qualities, including sharp intellect, keen insight, breadth of knowledge, and courage. During this journey, they visited Tunisia and Egypt, where they resided for nearly two years. Their travels also included several major Islamic cities and centers of learning, among them Damascus, where they met Shaykh Khālīd al-Naqshbandī, and Baghdad, where the Emir met the *naqīb al-ashraf*, Shaykh Maḥmūd al-Qādirī, and renewed the spiritual covenant. This journey afforded Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir the opportunity to observe the political and social conditions prevailing in these regions and contributed significantly to deepening his civilizational awareness and broadening his intellectual horizons, before he ultimately returned to complete the pilgrimage rites (al-Jazzār, 1997, p. 19; Bū‘azīz, 1983, pp. 42–43).

1.2. Manifestations of His Islamic Values through His Investiture (Bay‘a)

On **27 November 1832**, when Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir was twenty-four years old, he was formally invested (*bay‘a*) as leader of the tribes. This investiture came in response to the request of his father, Muḥyī al-Dīn, who proposed his son for leadership in view of the competence, leadership aptitude, and elevated moral qualities he possessed (Ben Khalīf, 2009, p. 72; al-‘Alawī, 1985). Through this act, his followers regarded him as both a religious and political leader, a defender of Islam, and the commander of their jihād movement against French occupation (Scott, 1981, p. 108). His uncle, ‘Alī Abū Ṭālib, expressed this investiture in the following terms: “*After the pledge of allegiance was concluded to the venerable Imām, our nephew, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Qādir ibn Muḥyī al-Dīn, may God revive religion through them both and assist them in managing the affairs of its people*” (al-‘Arabī, n.d., p. 42).

In the address delivered by Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir following his investiture, he declared: “*The people of Mascara and of eastern and western Ghrīs, and those neighboring them... [have pledged themselves] to the*

exaltation of God's word. For this reason, we call upon you to unite and agree together. Know that my ultimate aim is the unity of the Muḥammadan community and the establishment of the Aḥmādan rites, and upon God we rely in all of this."

He concluded his speech by quoting the Companion 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān (may God be pleased with him): *"Indeed, God restrains through authority what He does not restrain through the Qur'ān"* (Bū'azīz, 1983, p. 47).

In the same vein, the scholars of the Ghrīs plain addressed Muḥyī al-Dīn to affirm their allegiance to his son, stating: *"The friends of God, exalted be He, have agreed upon appointing your son 'Abd al-Qādir to support the religion of God"* (Bū'azīz, 1983, p. 49).

Emir 'Abd al-Qādir was thus given the title **Amīr al-Mu'minīn** and assumed the rank of *sulṭān*. Colonel Scott explains that this title signifies "supreme authority over religious and worldly affairs, and legal authority over subjects; for this reason he was called Sultan" (Scott, 1981, p. 111).

2. Religious Coexistence in the Thought and Practice of Emir 'Abd al-Qādir

2.1 Manifestations of Religious Coexistence in Algeria:

Despite the profound religious upbringing of Emir 'Abd al-Qādir, his deep internalization of Islamic teachings, and his commitment to adhering to them, promoting them, and defending them, this did not prevent him from adopting a moderate and open stance that enabled him to coexist with followers of other religions—particularly Christianity. This openness was manifested in concrete practices, most notably his visits to certain European churches, such as the Church of La Madeleine, where he expressed a revision of his earlier perception of Christians, stating: *"When I began my resistance to the French, I thought they were a people without religion; but I realized my mistake, and in any case, churches such as these convince me of that error"* (Churchill, n.d., pp. 22–23; Bū'azīz, 1983, p. 80).

His visits to European churches, his encounters with Christian clergy, and the peaceful interaction and exchange of ideas that accompanied them all contributed to consolidating the principle of religious coexistence in his thought. This approach was reflected in his relations with Christians in various contexts, the most significant manifestations of which are outlined below.

2.1.2. Religious Coexistence between Emir 'Abd al-Qādir and Europeans through the Exchange of Technical and Industrial Expertise in Algeria

In both his resistance and the construction of his state, Emir 'Abd al-Qādir relied—together with his followers—on strict adherence to the Book of God and the Sunnah of the Prophet Muḥammad PHPH, considering them the primary normative framework governing political and military life (al-'Alawī, 1985, p. 36). Nevertheless, this religious commitment did not prevent him from engaging in practical cooperation with certain Europeans, despite religious differences—particularly those who possessed technical and industrial expertise that he required. This cooperation extended to fields such as military manufacturing, including the production of ammunition, artillery, and weapons; the training of troops; coin minting; mineral exploitation; and other vital sectors (al-'Alawī, 1985, pp. 22–23; Sa'dallāh, 2007, vol. 1, p. 131).

Major Tourini, who visited Emir 'Abd al-Qādir's camp, notes that the Emir frequently inquired about conditions in France and its religion, stating: *"He asked us many questions about the situation in France and its religion"* (Denizen, 2012, p. 49).

This questioning may be understood within a critical and ethical framework. Its purpose was not so much to learn about Christianity itself as to draw attention to the contradiction between Christian teachings—grounded in tolerance—and the colonial practices of France in Algeria.

2.1.2. Religious Coexistence through His Treatment of Christian Prisoners

Despite his strict adherence to Islamic teachings and his leadership of a war against the Christian French army, Emir 'Abd al-Qādir was distinguished by his religious moderation and tolerance toward

followers of other faiths. He did not succumb to extremism or fanaticism, even under the harsh conditions of war. Historical sources affirm that he did not vent his anger on Christian prisoners; rather, he treated them with refined humaneness. This attitude is aptly summarized by the historian Yahyā Bū‘azīz, who states: “*Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir was endowed by God with a profound sense of humanity*” (Bū‘azīz, 1983, p. 80).

This benevolent treatment extended to both male and female prisoners. He showed them kindness, offered companionship, and took care of their hygiene; he even appointed individuals to wash their clothes and attend to their daily needs (Sa‘dallāh, 2007, p. 132; Scott, 1981, p. 123). As for female Christian captives, they received particular care, as Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir personally supervised their protection and safeguarded their dignity, ensuring that they were not subjected to any form of harm. This conduct reflects the depth of his humanity and the practical embodiment of his moderate vision of religious coexistence (Scott, 1981, p. 31).

The significance of this stance becomes even clearer when viewed against the broader context prevailing in Algeria at the time. For many Algerians, the conflict was perceived in explicitly religious terms, as a sacred struggle in defense of both faith and homeland. Colonel Scott describes this atmosphere by noting: “They are characterized by religious zeal... and how can we be surprised at the Arab’s disregard for danger, or even his pursuit of it, if we know that he sees martyrdom in battle and the killing of a Christian as an open path to Paradise” (Scott, 1981, pp. 91–108). Despite this charged environment, Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir remained firmly committed to the ethical constraints of Islamic law and its humanistic values in his treatment of prisoners. This commitment highlights his distinctiveness as an exceptional model of religious coexistence in a time of intense conflict.

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3. His Reception of French Envoys within His State

Despite the prolonged conflict that opposed Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir to the French authorities, France was eventually compelled, at a certain stage, to recognize his political entity and consequently appointed envoys to his state. Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir received these envoys with official honors in accordance with the diplomatic customs of the time. He even invited the French ambassador to pay repeated visits in order to gain insight into the conditions of both states and to seek solutions to the unresolved issues between them. However, this diplomatic openness was by no means grounded in political naïveté. On the contrary, his intelligence and prudence led him to subject the French envoy to strict surveillance after he realized that the latter was simultaneously acting as a covert spy under the guise of diplomatic representation (Bū‘azīz, 1983, pp. 97–98).

This stance indicates that Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir’s reception of a Christian French ambassador did not constitute a political or religious concession. Rather, it reflected his principled refusal to oppose peaceful French Christians who posed no threat to his state. He clearly distinguished between the French people and their religion, on the one hand, and the aggressive colonial policy pursued by France toward Algeria, on the other. This distinction is explicitly articulated in a letter he addressed to the French authorities after the end of his resistance, in which he declared: “If you harbor resentment over the wars that took place between us over many years, I do not believe that anyone on the face of the earth—so long as he remains firmly attached to his Arab identity—would not have acted as I did and exerted every possible effort...” (Bū‘azīz, 1983, p. 81).

Similarly, in a letter sent to General Bugeaud in 1841, Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir clarified that the war was not motivated by hatred toward the French people or their religion, but rather by a legitimate defense of land and homeland. He stated: “If the French state does not possess sufficient land for its subjects and has

therefore sent you to seize our land... then we shall exert all our efforts to defend it and to protect our territory until God judges between us and them, for the land is His land and the servants are His servants” (Bū‘azīz, 1983, p. 101).

Nevertheless, this approach—characterized by religious tolerance and political openness, particularly during periods of truce—was not without negative consequences. The historian Yaḥyā Bū‘azīz notes that Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir’s goodwill toward France and his policy of conciliation and leniency, especially during ceasefire periods, enabled the French authorities to plant agents and spies within his state; the Roches affair stands as a telling example of this outcome (Bū‘azīz, 1983, p. 116). This reality underscores the complexity of Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir’s experience in balancing the requirements of religious and diplomatic coexistence, on the one hand, with the imperatives of political and military struggle, on the other.

4. Religious Coexistence between Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī and the Christians of Greater Syria

During this period, the Christians of Greater Syria (Bilād al-Shām) were subjected to waves of persecution and violence, in which certain local authorities were complicit, alongside groups of Muslims and Druze. These events resulted in the deaths of large numbers of Christians. While some managed to survive by going into hiding, they soon found themselves facing severe humanitarian conditions due to the depletion of food supplies and the tightening of sieges imposed upon them, which deprived them of the most basic means of subsistence.

Amidst these bloody events, Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī hastened to intervene out of a deeply rooted humanitarian and moral impulse, despite the religious difference and despite the fact that these Christians belonged to the same faith as the French, against whom he had waged a fierce and prolonged war in Algeria. This consideration, however, did not constitute an obstacle to his action. Rather, he gave precedence to universal human values and to the principles of Islamic law, promptly mobilizing to rescue and protect the Christians, employing a range of methods and measures to ensure their safety and preserve their lives.

4.1. Deterrence through Warning against Foreign Intervention

Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir took the initiative to contact the notables of the city of Damascus, urging them to put an end to the acts of violence and to grant peace and security to the Christians. He warned them of the grave consequences that could result from the continuation of these massacres, foremost among them the possibility of European intervention in the affairs of the country, under the pretext of protecting Christians—an intervention that could ultimately lead to the subjugation of Greater Syria to colonial domination. Despite the initial hesitation of the local authorities to respond promptly to his appeals, Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir did not relent; rather, he continued his political and diplomatic efforts and exerted sustained pressure to halt the attacks and bring the killings to an end (Anonymous, 2006, p. 114).

This approach—based on invoking the danger of foreign intervention—may be regarded as a shrewd political strategy adopted by Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir to pressure the authorities and accelerate decision-making aimed at stopping the massacres perpetrated against Christians. It also reflects his profound awareness of international power dynamics and his acute understanding of the dangers of colonial expansion during that period.

4.2. Persuasion through Religious Arguments

Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir never hesitated, even for a moment, to defend the Christians. Alongside his political initiatives, he relied on persuasion grounded in religious evidence, addressing the Muslims of Greater Syria on the basis of Islamic legal principles that prohibit the killing of innocents and guarantee the protection of the *ahl al-dhimma*. This religious discourse had a significant impact on some rulers, prompting them to issue decisions forbidding the persecution or assault of vulnerable Christians and allowing them to return to their lives and activities within a framework of security and peace (Anonymous, 2006, p. 254). One

source describes this stance as follows: “It was decreed that among the Muslims there should arise a noble man who would rise to their defense and show compassion for their plight; and this noble figure is Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī, whose renown spread far and wide, and whose virtue and generosity encompassed the Christians of Greater Syria” (Anonymous, 2006, p. 254).

These efforts, however, did not put a definitive end to the unrest. Only a few days later, new acts of violence erupted following attacks by some extremist Muslims against Christians. As soon as the news reached Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir, he convened an emergency meeting on the evening of the massacre, attended by Aḥmad Pasha and members of the Consultative Council. During this meeting, he called for an immediate end to the strife between Muslims and Christians and urged the governor to intervene directly and punish anyone who refused to cease acts of violence and the killing of innocents. He even issued a religious legal opinion (*fatwā*) permitting the ruler to fight the insurgents, even if they claimed adherence to Islamic law—a *fatwā* that was endorsed by the provincial mufti, Tāhir Efendi (Anonymous, 2006, p. 257).

Beyond political and religious pressure, Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir personally undertook the rescue of as many Christians as possible, particularly women and children. He dispatched his men to the Christian quarter, where the number of those who sought refuge with him was estimated at around five thousand individuals. These refugees were issued documents attesting that they belonged to the Maghribi community under his protection, after which they were transferred to his residence. The number of Christians who found shelter in his home reportedly reached approximately fifteen thousand, including consuls and representatives of European and Asian states, such as the French consul, the British consuls, the consul of the United States of America, as well as the consuls of Greece and Russia (Anonymous, 2006, p. 258; al-Ḥasībī, 1979, p. 30; Ben Dāha, 2014, p. 30).

Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir also offered a financial reward of five *qurūsh* to anyone who succeeded in freeing a Christian captive from the hands of extremists and bringing him or her to a safe place. He personally supervised the protection of these refugees and slept only minimally, out of fear of any sudden attack against them (Ben Dāha, 2014, p. 30; Ḥarshūsh, 2020, p. 52).

Three days after the massacre, some extremists attempted to force Muslims to hand over the Christians they had sheltered in their homes, threatening them with death. When they proceeded to the residence of Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir and demanded that he surrender those under his protection, he emerged with his loyal followers and threatened them with severe punishment should they dare violate his sanctuary. He demonstrated his full readiness to confront them by force, which compelled them to retreat, fearing his resolve and strength (Anonymous, 2006, p. 259).

These positions confirm that the doctrine of religious coexistence and respect for differing beliefs constituted a fundamental basis for Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir’s actions. He articulated this principle clearly in his letter to Imam Shmuel, stating: “Protecting the *ahl al-dhimma* to the extent of one’s capacity and effort is required by the commands of the Sunni law, as well as by chivalry and humanity; for our law is a completion of noble moral virtues.” He thus affirmed that his actions were fully consistent with the teachings of Islam, which is not a religion of harshness, cruelty, or severity (Ben ‘Abd al-Qādir, 1903, vol. 2, p. 115; Ben Dāha, 2014, p. 30).

These deeds resonated widely at the international level and contributed to consolidating the image of Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir as a global symbol of religious tolerance. Some European figures even referred to him as the “Emperor of the Arabs,” in recognition of the humanitarian achievement he accomplished in extinguishing the sectarian strife. As noted by ‘Idda Ben Dāha, the year 1860 witnessed “a remarkable episode in the history of tolerance and interreligious coexistence, during which the figure of Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir spread across all corners of the world” (Ben Dāha, 2014, p. 30).

Conclusion:

Based on the foregoing analysis, it becomes evident that Emir ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Jazā’irī emerged from a deeply committed religious family that played a significant role in consolidating Islamic and Sufi

values. His father, Muḥyī al-Dīn, was among the most prominent shaykhs of the Qādiriyya order in Algeria, a fact that clearly influenced the Emir's religious and moral formation. The study has also shown that Emir 'Abd al-Qādir received a diverse intellectual education encompassing the religious sciences, language, and thought, in addition to his exposure to other fields of knowledge. This multifaceted education contributed to shaping a balanced personality that combined profound religiosity with intellectual openness.

The findings further demonstrate that the two pilgrimage journeys undertaken by Emir 'Abd al-Qādir, along with his visits to major Islamic centers and encounters with their scholars, had a profound impact on broadening his intellectual horizons and deepening his religious and civilizational awareness. Moreover, the study confirms that Emir 'Abd al-Qādir displayed a clear religious openness toward followers of other faiths, particularly Christianity. He treated peaceful Christians in Algeria with humanity, respect, and tolerance, while simultaneously confronting aggressors in defense of religion and homeland.

Finally, the study concludes that this religious and humanitarian openness found its most explicit expression in Emir 'Abd al-Qādir's stance during the sectarian strife in Greater Syria. He hastened to protect defenseless Christians—women and children alike—openly declaring his commitment to their defense and confronting manifestations of fanaticism and violence. This conduct underscores his stature as a pioneering historical model of religious coexistence and the promotion of universal human values in times of crisis.

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